

Message Text

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ACTION INR-07

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FM AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2639

INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

USLO PEKING

C O N F I D E N T I A L L E N I N G R A D 1 5 2 2

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: CH, UR, PINT, PFOR

SUBJ: SOVIET POLICY TOWARD CHINA AFTER MAO

REF: A. STATE 229466, B. MOSCOW 14529

1. DURING COURSE OF OTHER BUSINESS, CONGEN OFFICERS RAISED CURRENT CHINA SITUATION WITH LENINGRAD UNIVERSITY PRO RECTOR FOR INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS N.A. SPESHNEV, NOTED SINOLOGIST AND PAST MEMBER OF SOVIET-CHINESE BORDER TALKS TEAM. SPESHNEV MADE CLEAR THAT HE HAS NO INSIDE KNOWLEDGE OF CURRENT SOVIET FOREIGN MINISTRY PLANNING ON CHINESE SITUATION COMMENTING WITH MILD IRONY THAT HE OBTAINS LATEST NEWS ON EVENTS FROM "LISTENING TO YOUR RADIO". HIS VIEWS ARE BEING REPORTED AS PERCEPTIONS OF "OUTSIDE" SOVIET EXPERT THOROUGHLY ACQUAINTED WITH PAST SOVIET THINKING AND DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES ON CHINA POLICY.

2. SPESHNEV DECLINED TO SPECULATE ON WHO MIGHT WIN OUT IN SUCCESSION STRUGGLE NOTING ONLY THAT HE EXPECTED MURKY SITUATION TO EXIST FOR SOME TIME WITH SUCCESSION STRUGGLE LASTING PERHAPS "AS LONG AS FIVE YEARS." HE BELIEVES IT LIKELY THAT FUTURE LEADER WILL COME OUT OF THE MILITARY OBSERVING THAT MILITARY HAVE SHOWN THEMSELVES

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STRONG IN INTERNAL CHINESE EVENTS IN RECENT YEARS,

PARTICULARLY IN "POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH CHINA."

3. SPESHNEV DOES NOT EXPECT ANY NEW SOVIET INITIATIVES ON CHINA FOR TIME BEING. HE BELIEVES MOST LIKELY SHORT RUN COURSE FOR SOVIETS IS TO ADOPT WAIT AND SEE ATTITUDE UNTIL POLITICAL SUCCESSION ISSUE CLARIFIES, LETTING SOVIET PROPOSALS ALREADY ON THE TABLE CONSTITUTE RECORD FOR THE TIME BEING. SOVIET INITIATIVES IN ANY CASE ARE COMPLICATED BY FACT THAT "NOBODY" REALLY KNOWS WHAT IS GOING ON IN CHINA. HE DESCRIBED SOVIET DIPLOMATS IN PEKING AS "PUZZLE SOLVERS" WHO ARE RELATIVELY ISOLATED AND LACK HARD FACTS AND CONTACTS. SPESHNEV ESPECIALLY DID NOT EXPECT ANY NEW SOVIET INITIATIVES ON BORDER PROBLEMS REMARKING THAT MOVES IN THIS AREA ARE ONLY LIKELY TO COME RELATIVELY LATE AFTER OTHER INITIATIVES HAD SHOWN SIGNS OF SUCCESS.

4. REGARDLESS OF CHINESE LEADERSHIP OUTCOME, SPESHNEV DOES NOT EXPECT ANY SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENT OF SOVIET-CHINESE RELATIONS IN NEAR FUTURE. HE QUOTED "OLD SAYING" THAT "CHINESE LIVE IN CHINA AND THE EMPEROR IS CHINESE" TO REFLECT HIS BELIEF THAT WHOEVER EVENTUALLY SUCCEEDS TO POWER CANNOT ESCAPE PERVASIVE INTELLECTUAL SHAPING OF THE ANCIENT CHINESE THOUGHT PATTERNS. CHINESE, HE SAID, OPERATE FROM HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF CHINESE "CENTRISM" WHICH WILL NOT CHANGE AND WHICH WILL CONTINUE MAKE ANY CHANGE IN CHINESE ATTITUDE TOWARD SOVIET UNION DIFFICULT. NEUBERT

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